

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1 1. A method of benchmarking product samples provided to a purchasing
2 entity by multiple independent suppliers, comprising:
3 collecting multiple sets of performance parameter values corresponding to
4 results of testing each of the product samples at test facilities of each of the suppliers;
5 and
6 generating an evaluation report based upon the multiple sets of performance
7 parameter values.

1 2. The method of claim 1, wherein collecting multiple sets of performance
2 parameter values comprises testing the product samples at test facilities of each of
3 the suppliers.

1 3. The method of claim 2, wherein testing of product samples is
2 controlled by the purchasing entity.

1 4. The method of claim 3, wherein the purchasing entity prevents
2 unauthorized access to the product samples during testing.

1 5. The method of claim 3, wherein the purchasing entity maintains
2 custody of the product samples during testing.

1 6. The method of claim 2, further comprising removing identification
2 information from the product samples before testing.

1 7. The method of claim 6, wherein removing identification information
2 comprises removing from each product any information from which the product
3 supplier is identifiable.

1 8. The method of claim 2, wherein the product samples are tested at test
2 facilities of each of the suppliers under substantially similar test conditions.

1 9. The method of claim 1, further comprising analyzing the multiple sets
2 of performance parameters.

1 10. The method of claim 8, further comprising compiling a single
2 consistent set of performance parameter values from the multiple sets of performance
3 parameter values.

1 11. The method of claim 1, further comprising transmitting the evaluation
2 report to one or more of the suppliers.

1 12. The method of claim 11, further comprising collecting a fee from a
2 given supplier before transmitting the evaluation report to the given supplier.

1 13. The method of claim 11, further comprising customizing the evaluation
2 report so that a supplier receiving the evaluation report is able to benchmark
3 performance of its product sample against other product samples without identifying
4 other suppliers.

1 14. The method of claim 13, wherein the evaluation report is customized
2 by encoding identification information of all suppliers other than the receiving
3 supplier.

1 15. The method of claim 1, wherein generating the evaluation report
2 comprises compiling a data structure relating parameter values and supplier test
3 facilities for each product sample.

1 16. The method of claim 15, wherein generating the evaluation report
2 comprises producing a graph displaying one or more performance parameter values
3 for each of the product samples.

1 17. A computer program for benchmarking product samples provided to a
2 purchasing entity by multiple independent suppliers, the computer program residing
3 on a computer-readable medium and comprising computer-readable instructions for
4 causing a computer to:

5 collect multiple sets of performance parameter values corresponding to results
6 of testing each of the product samples at test facilities of each of the suppliers; and

7 generate an evaluation report based upon the multiple sets of performance
8 parameter values.

1 18. The computer program of claim 17, further comprising computer-
2 readable instructions for analyzing the multiple sets of performance parameters.

1 19. The computer program of claim 18, further comprising computer-
2 readable instructions for compiling a single consistent set of performance parameter
3 values from the multiple sets of performance parameter values.

1 20. The computer program of claim 17, further comprising computer-
2 readable instructions for customizing the evaluation report so that a supplier
3 receiving the evaluation report is able to benchmark performance of its product
4 sample against other product samples without identifying other suppliers.